

Penobscot Nation opposes CMP transmission project



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In this May 28, 2019,, photo, a homemade sign is posted on a telephone pole in protest of Central Maine Power's controversial hydropower transmission corridor in Jackman. Credit: Robert F. Bukaty / AP

The Penobscot Nation is coming out in opposition to Central Maine Power's proposed transmission line through Maine's western woods.

Penobscot Natural Resources Director John Banks said the tribe is in solidarity with Canada's Innu Nation, whose lands in Labrador have been damaged by decades of flooding to serve energy projects by Hydro-Quebec.

“We know what it’s like to have lands flooded and destroyed. That has happened to us in the past,” he said.

The CMP project would carry electricity from Hydro-Quebec facilities into New England, to serve a contract with Massachusetts utilities. Banks said Innu Nation officials approached the Penobscots recently to seek their assistance.

He said today’s heightened awareness of environmental injustices that disproportionately affect nonwhite communities could help the tribes make the case.

“A lot of attention on the issue following police brutality of George Floyd. And that’s good that these things are becoming more and more aware. But the tribes have been going through this for thousands of years right here in Maine and in Canada,” Banks said.

Penobscot Chief Kirk Francis sent a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers last week demanding that the agency require a comprehensive environmental impact statement that analyzes the effects of the corridor in Maine and across the border. He said precedent shows that federal regulators can and should consider the transnational effects of major infrastructure projects.

Corps officials say they received the tribe’s letter and will respond to it after review.

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